

# Africans in the New World

## 1493-1834

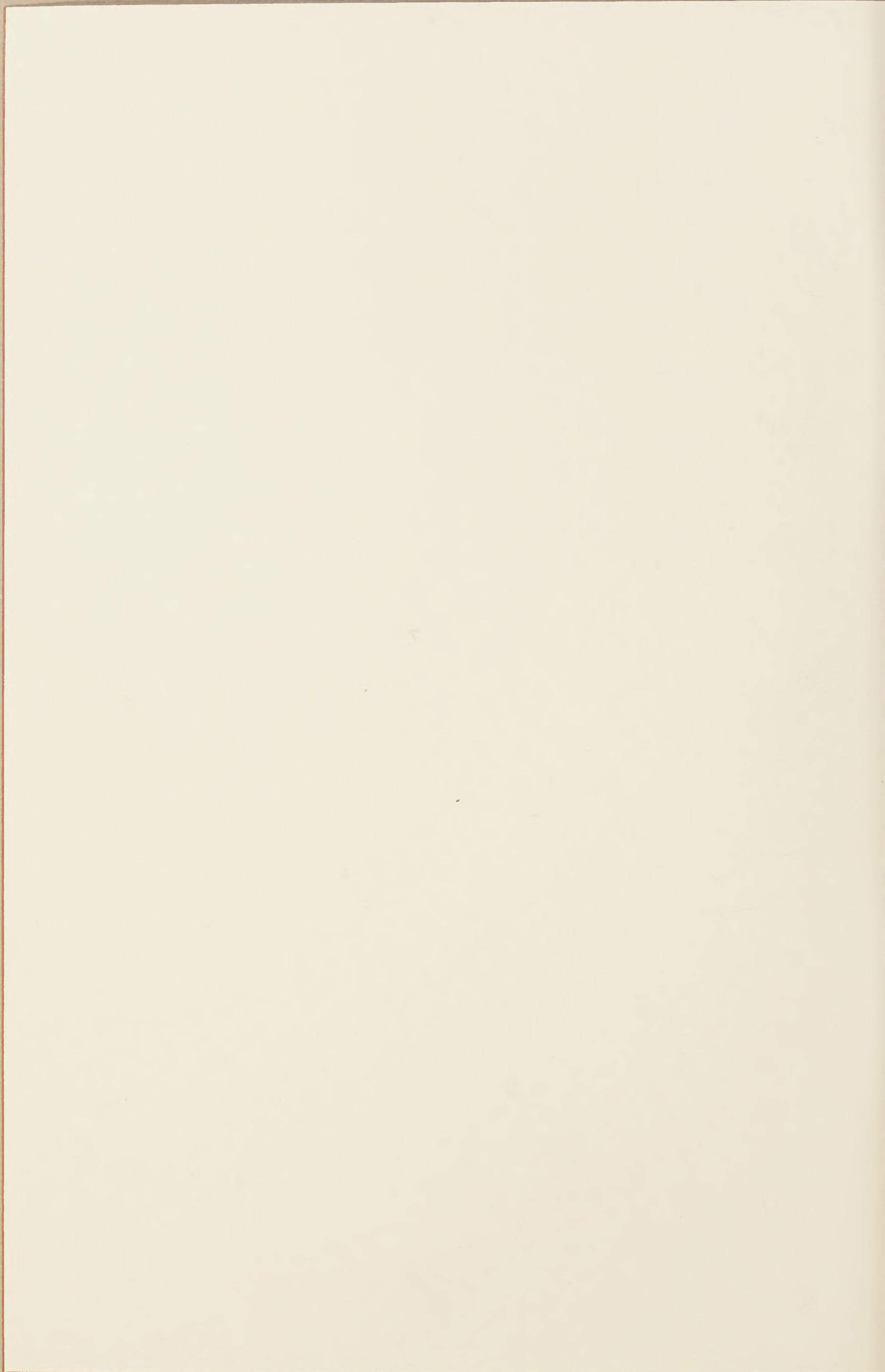














AFRICANS IN THE NEW WORLD 1493-1834







Africans in the New World  
1493–1834

*by* LARISSA V. BROWN

An Exhibition at  
The John Carter Brown Library

Providence, Rhode Island



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*Frontispiece:*

A Slave Family in Suriname.

From J.G. Stedman, *Narrative of a five years' expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, 2nd ed. (London, 1806), Vol. 2, facing p. 291.

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## Foreword

ACCORDING TO THE LATEST scholarly investigations, some ten to twelve million Africans were brought to the New World before 1870, in all cases involuntarily. The number is so staggeringly high, and the circumstances so horrifying, one can scarcely grasp its meaning in human terms. The European discovery of America in 1492 set in motion virtual tidal waves of social change and migration, the African diaspora being one of the most massive. It and the equally catastrophic decimation by disease of American Indians in the sixteenth century are the great tragic dimensions of the merging of peoples of the world that began with Columbus.

History cannot justify such tragedies. It is presumptuous even to draw up balance sheets of benefits and losses, although this was done many times in defense of the slave trade. The blessings of "civilization" and "Christianity" brought to "pagans" made everything all right, it was said. The proper task of historians in this case is above all to tell the story, to reconstitute this epic in all its details. Much of this is cruel and sordid, but as this catalogue is intended to show, there is also much to be said about black culture and society in the Americas that is independent of the slavery story.

It is one of the glories of the John Carter Brown Library that when the founder began to build the collection in the middle of the nineteenth century, he conceived of his "Biblioteca Americana" as grandly comprehensive. Himself an ardent opponent of slavery and a grandnephew of one of the leading American abolitionists of the eighteenth century, Moses Brown, John Carter Brown sought to find and preserve forever the printed



sources that would make it possible for future generations of scholars to recount the total history of the discovery and development of the New World and its impact on Europe up to the early nineteenth century. The printed documentation for the history of blacks, not only as slaves and laborers but also as rebels, as artisans and scientists, as artists and writers, was eagerly gathered into this collecting endeavor along with works by and about everyone and everything else that had anything to do with the Americas in this period.

A particular strength of the collection as a whole is its consistently hemispheric focus, which in the case of the history of Afro-Americans is an essential perspective. Part of an international market once they were aboard a slave ship, African men and women in the New World could live out their careers anywhere from New England to Brazil. Hence, the antebellum plantation slavery of the southern United States, so familiar to Americans, is not an especially good starting point for attempting to understand the African experience in the New World.

The Library was fortunate in being able to secure the services of Dr. Larissa Brown, who holds a Ph.D. in Brazilian history from the University of Virginia, to prepare this exhibition. As has been indicated above, the history of Africans in the Americas is a subject too vast and diverse to be encompassed in a small exhibition. Yet Dr. Brown has done a superb job of pulling together and explicating a selection of representative items. On the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the first arrival of blacks in New England in 1638, and the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, the John Carter Brown Library is pleased to offer to the general public this brief review of some of the documentation available in the Library concerning Africans in the New World.

NORMAN FIERING

*Director and Librarian*



AFRICANS IN THE NEW WORLD 1493-1834





Fig. 1  
Brazilian Blacks Singing and Playing  
African Instruments.  
From Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil* (Paris, 1834–1839), Vol. 2, Planche 41.



## Prologue

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO in 1888 the last slaves in the Americas became free citizens of Brazil. One hundred and twenty-five years ago, in 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, ending slavery in the rebellious southern states. In Haiti, slaves had fought for their freedom and gained the independence of their country in 1804 during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and from the 1820s to the 1850s the independent nations of Spanish America freed their slaves. Slaves in the British colonies gained their freedom in 1834, in the French colonies in 1848, and in the Dutch colonies in 1865. The last slaves under Spanish rule were emancipated in Cuba in 1886.

From Argentina and Chile in the south to Canada in the north, Africans in greater or lesser numbers contributed to the formation of new societies in this hemisphere. Most of these Africans were brought to Latin America and the Caribbean, more than one-third to Brazil alone, and they were most numerous in areas where plantation export agriculture dominated the economy. Torn from their African roots and deposited in an alien economic, social, and cultural environment, they and their descendants constructed a new Afro-American culture from a combination of African, European, and American elements and in turn contributed to the formation of American national cultures.



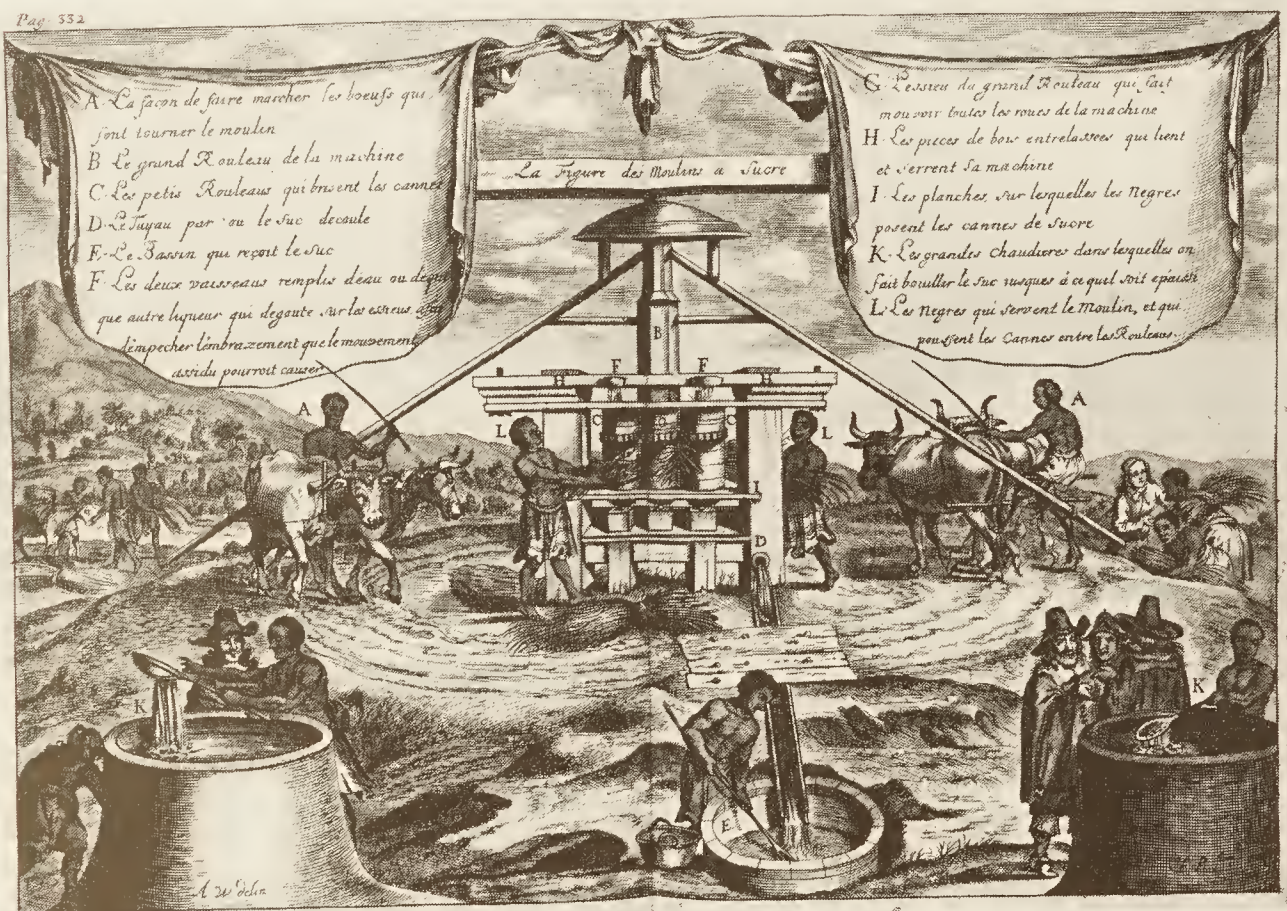


Fig. 2  
 A Seventeenth-Century Sugar Mill.  
 From Charles de Rochefort, *Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique*, 2nd ed. (Rotterdam, 1665), between pp. 332 and 333.



## I. The Slave Trade

**H**ISPANICIZED AFRICAN SLAVES and servants from the Iberian peninsula participated in European exploration and conquest of the Americas from the very beginning. A free black man sailed on Columbus's second expedition in 1493, and blacks were present in the early Spanish settlement of Hispaniola and Cuba. Black men saw the Pacific Ocean with Balboa, and the armies of Cortés and Pizarro which conquered Mexico and Peru included black slaves.

The first direct shipment of African slaves across the Atlantic to the New World took place in 1518. The major slaving powers were Portugal, Holland, France, and England. Colonial settlers also engaged in the trade, especially in New England and Brazil. Although Spanish America was an important destination for slaves, the Spanish were not directly engaged in the trade because Spain did not have settlements on the African coast. During much of the colonial period the Spanish crown sold monopoly contracts, called *asientos*, to nationals of other countries, and the *asiento* became a lucrative prize in international treaty negotiations.

The slave trader constantly sought the perfect balance between minimum care (and therefore cost) and maximum survival of his cargo. The crowded slave ships were perfect breeding grounds for disease and were managed with the cruel discipline of a penitentiary. Average slave mortality gradually declined over the centuries of the trade, but it was still extraordinarily high. The Africans in the ships, often two-thirds male and mostly adolescents and young adults, were frightened and angry, facing an uncertain and arbitrary future.



1. Tomás de Mercado. *Tratos y Contratos de Mercaderes y tratantes discididos y determinados*. Salamanca, 1569.

In this book on contracts, Mercado discussed the legitimacy of the slave trade. His vivid denunciation of abuses in the slave trade is well known, but in fact Mercado did not argue that the trade was illegitimate. On the contrary, he wrote, theologians agreed that slavery and the slave trade per se were legal and that there were many just causes of enslavement. However, a buyer could not make a legitimate purchase if he suspected that the merchandise offered for sale was stolen. Because so many of the blacks in the slave trade were illegally enslaved, and the buyer could have no way of knowing if the slaves he wished to buy were justly enslaved, Mercado concluded that no one should engage in the trade.

2. Juan de Villalobos. *Manifiesto que a Su Magestad... Haze el Capitán Don Juan de Villalobos... Sobre La Introducción De Esclavos Negros en las Indias Occidentales*. Seville, 1682.

The Spanish developed an abstract unit for counting slaves, the *pieza de Indias*, which corresponded to a healthy slave in the prime of life (16 to 32 years old in this document). Villalobos, who lived in Veracruz, Mexico, proposed an asiento to be held by Spaniards in order to monopolize the distribution of slaves within the Spanish empire and keep foreigners from controlling the trade entirely.

Although his plan was not accepted, it reveals certain characteristics of the market for slaves in the Spanish empire. The Dutch would be contracted to bring 2000 piezas de Indias to the island of Cumaná off Venezuela and from there five Spanish sub-contractors would handle the distribution for 1) Colombia and Peru (1100 piezas); 2) Caracas, Venezuela, and its district (250); 3) Mexico (250); 4) Cuba (200); 5) western Venezuela (100); and another 100 piezas could be purchased directly at Cumaná for Trinidad and Margarita. The Dutch were to bring two-thirds males and would be allowed ten percent more to account for mortality. Villalobos argued against an unregulated slave trade because it would cause a glut and encourage the unproductive and ostentatious use of slaves.



3. Johann Paul Augspurger. *Kurtze und warhaffte Beschreibung der See-Reisen von Amsterdam in Holland nacher Brasilien in America, und Angola in Africa. Vom 4. Novembris 1640, biss 10 Julii 1642.* Schleusingen, 1644.

Between 1580 and 1640 Spain and Portugal were united under one Hapsburg monarch and during the same period the Dutch began their eighty-year struggle for independence from Hapsburg rulers. As part of that struggle they attacked the Portuguese empire, gaining control of the rich Brazilian sugar-producing province of Pernambuco between 1630 and 1654 and the Portuguese slaving stations in West Africa and Angola which provided the labor force for Brazilian sugar. Augspurger described the voyage of a Dutch West India Company slave ship which traveled to Pernambuco, on to Angola, back to Pernambuco and then to Holland.

4. *Journal d'un Voyage sur les Costes d'Afrique et aux Indes d'Espagne.* Amsterdam, 1723.

The French gained the Spanish slave asiento in the early eighteenth century, and the author of this narrative left France in 1702 to buy slaves in Guinea and sell them to the Spanish in Buenos Aires. Numerous difficulties plagued the voyage, and the author worried about his profits as the slaves in his shipment began dying. During a stop in Bahia, Brazil, he somewhat enviously described the Bahians' direct slave trade involving 200 brigantines sailing each year to Africa. They "send to the coast of Guinea to buy blacks which they sell here, and on whom they earn more than one hundred per cent; because it is worth remarking that equipping a voyage hardly costs them anything. They put a dozen sailors in the ships and all they give them for provisions is manioc flour, some beans and a few barrels of salt beef. They buy the blacks with gewgaws and an infinity of bad merchandise which they get for very little. The voyage takes at most four or five months: you can judge from that the profit which the trader must make."



5. William Snelgrave. *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade*. London, 1734.

This captain of an English slave ship and agent for the Royal African Company wrote a matter-of-fact account of his experiences. He produced the usual justifications of the slave trade—it saved the lives of African prisoners of war who might otherwise be killed and gave the slaves a better life in the colonies—but he also noted how the British colonial slave economies had benefited the nation as a whole: “’Tis almost incredible, what great Advantages have accrued to the Nation thereby.”

6. Maria Graham [Callcott]. *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil and Residence There, During Part of the Years 1821, 1822, 1823*. London, 1824.

Maria Graham drew attention to the iniquities of slavery in Brazil. The engraving shown here represents a slave market in the northeastern city of Recife, Pernambuco. The ill-clad slaves for sale sit in the street, and to the right one man raises his fist to a slave while another is about to strike a slave with a baton. At left a woman with a necklace and a printed shawl, but no shoes, which indicates that she is a slave, peddles the foodstuffs that she carries on a tray on her head. After being purchased in the slave market of a coastal city like this one, slaves sometimes faced long trips into the interior or along the coast to their final destination. In addition to the importation of slaves from Africa, all slave societies also sustained an internal slave trade.

7. Courte de la Blanchardière. *Nouveau Voyage Fait Au Perou*. Paris, 1751.

When this French traveler stopped in Rio de Janeiro on his return from Peru, his Spanish ship captain bought a thirteen or fourteen year-old slave boy. “This poor, miserable boy, while we were in port, cried continually, and refused to eat, because he believed, as he told his master later, that he was to be fattened up, and then killed and eaten.”



## II. The World of Work

**A**FRICAN SLAVES were originally imported into the Americas as a labor force to replace Amerindian populations. European diseases and maltreatment by settlers caused severe declines in the Indian populations first in the Caribbean islands and then in the Mexican and Peruvian centers of colonization on the mainland. Moreover, nomadic and semi-nomadic Indian peoples in Brazil and other regions, whether enslaved or nominally free, proved to be less productive plantation workers than African slaves for a number of reasons, including susceptibility to disease, greater opportunity for flight, and unfamiliarity with long-term agriculture.

We are accustomed to the image of the plantation slave who produced an export crop like sugar, tobacco, cotton, or coffee, but African slaves also worked in mines, on ranches, growing foodstuffs for local and regional economies, and in a wide variety of urban occupations. Free people of color, black or of mixed race, also labored in city and countryside, as skilled and unskilled workers.

8. Samuel Champlain. *Brief Discours des Choses Plus Remarquables que Sammuel Champlain de Brovage A reconnues aux Indes Occidentales*. 1602.

During his 1599 visit to Mexico City, Champlain commented on the large number of black slaves in the city and working in the silver mines to the north. There were no settled Indian peoples in the mining regions, so when the mines were discovered, Indians and skilled black slaves were moved there. The Mexican slave population reached its peak



shortly before 1650, though it never made up more than two percent of the colony's population. By the time of independence in 1821, there were no more than 6,000 slaves in Mexico.

9. Gaspar de Escalona Agüero. *Gazophilatium Regium Perubicum*. Madrid, 1647.

This treatise on fiscal administration and legislation for the viceroyalty of Peru includes a discussion of the two pesos tax paid on each new slave entering Lima. "In the extended Kingdoms of Peru, . . . the influx of black slaves is larger and more numerous, than in other parts of the world, and of no less risk, because of the inconveniences and dangers which have resulted from the status of this people in other empires." Black slaves were used not only in the city of Lima but also in coastal estates which produced for the internal market and, to a much more limited degree, as skilled workers in the mines.

10. Thomas Gage. *The English-American his Travail by Sea and Land: or, A New Survey of the West-Indies*. London, 1648.

Gage was an English Dominican monk who spent a number of years in Mexico and Central America before returning to England and becoming a Protestant. His description of Mexico City is famous, including his detailed observation of the clothing worn by black and mulatto women in the city. "Most of these are or have been slaves, though love have set them loose at liberty, to inslave souls to sinne and Satan. And there are so many of this kind both men and women grown to a height of pride and vanity, that many times, the Spaniards have feared they would rise up and mutiny against them." Gage, however, also emphasized the importance of black slave labor to the cattle ranches and indigo plantations of Guatemala, and the existence of runaway slave communities in the mountains. The runaways preyed upon muletrains, "without doing any harm unto the people, or slaves that goe with the Mules; rather these rejoyce with them, being of one colour, and subject to slavery and misery which the others have shaken off; by whose example and encouragment many of these also shake off their misery, and joyne with them to enjoy libertie, though it be in the woods and mountaines."



11. Ottho Keye. *Beschryvinge Van het Heerlijcke ende Gezegende Landt Guajana, Waer inne gelegen is de seer voorname Lant-streke genaemt, Serrenamme, Die tegenwoordigh beseten wort by den Staet van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Provintien*. The Hague, 1660.

In this comparison of Dutch Guiana (Suriname) with New Netherland (New York), the tropical colony was judged superior. Keye attempted to dispose of the argument that the slave trade was unchristian with the usual religious and pragmatic replies and concluded that a slave in the warm weather of the tropics was better off than an East European peasant laboring in the cold and wet. As befit a bourgeois Dutchman, Keye carefully presented information on the cost of setting up and maintaining a plantation, including the cost of slaves on five years credit, their food and clothing, the profits they were likely to produce, and how those profits could then be reinvested in more slaves and sugar-making equipment.

12. Charles de Rochefort. *Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique*. 2nd ed. Rotterdam, 1665.

Portugal was a pioneer in the plantation production of sugar with African slave labor, first in the Algarve and Madeira and then in Brazil. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, Brazil was the world's foremost sugar producer. By the 1640s, however, the sugar revolution was sweeping over the Caribbean and Barbados began to give Brazil stiff competition. This engraving shows a typical seventeenth-century ox-driven sugar mill attended by slaves in the French Caribbean. Rochefort noticed the solidarity which developed among slaves on a plantation: "They care for each other passionately, and even though they were born in different countries and sometimes are born enemies, they support and help one another as if they were all brothers."

13. George Warren. *An Impartial Description of Surinam upon the Continent of Guiana in America*. London, 1667.

Warren's description shown here is a useful summary of life for the plantation slave in the seventeenth century: lots of hard work; cultivation of garden plots for food; occasional salt fish or meat for protein; poor shelter and clothing. Although Warren called the slaves "natur-



ally treacherous and bloody," he also could summon some sympathy for their condition: "They believe in the Ancient Pythagorean Errour of the Soul's Transmigration out of one body into another, that when they dye, they shall return into their own Countries and be Regenerated, so live in the World by a Constant Revolution; which Conceit makes many of them over-fondly wooe their Deaths, not otherwise hoping to be freed from that indeed un-equall'd Slavery."

14. William Dampier. *A Voyage to New Holland, &c. In the Year, 1699*. London, 1703. Vol. III.

Urban slaves engaged in a wide variety of activities and were permitted varying degrees of autonomy. In some cases, the slaves paid their masters a specified amount from their earnings and lived independently with the remainder. Other slaves lived in the master's household but were hired out. When Dampier passed through Bahia, the capital of Brazil, he commented on the use of slaves as sailors in both the coastal trade and for whaling, as domestic servants, footmen, porters, and artisans, and as housekeeper-concubines for bachelors: "The Negro-slaves in this Town are so numerous, that they make up the greatest part or bulk of the Inhabitants: Every House . . . having some, both Men & Women."

15. Amédée François Frézier. *Relation du Voyage de la Mer du Sud aux côtes du Chily et du Perou Fait pendant les années 1712, 1713, & 1714*. Paris, 1716.

On his way to the Pacific Frézier stopped in Bahia, where, like Dampier, he found the city a "new Guinea." This engraving shows slaves carrying a *serpentina*. "The rich people, despite the [steepness of Bahia's streets], never go on foot, always industrious in finding ways to distinguish themselves from other men, in America as in Europe, they would be ashamed to make use of the legs which nature gave us for walking."

16. Hugh Jones. *The Present State of Virginia*. London, 1724.

Slaves on Virginia tobacco plantations cultivated their own provision grounds and took care of livestock in addition to working with



the export crop, and some were trained to be sawyers, carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, and other artisans. Jones maintained that they did not work exceptionally hard but that "their greatest Hardship [is] that they and their Posterity are not at their own Liberty or Disposal, but are the Property of their Owners." Not surprisingly, blacks who had been chiefs in Africa did not take well to being slaves in Virginia.

17. Le Gentil de la Barbinais. *Nouveau Voyage autour du Monde*. Amsterdam, 1728. Vol. I.

Le Gentil was in South America in late 1714 and early 1715 and was a sharp observer of the slave societies of Brazil and Peru. Like many European travelers, he found the lower classes of New World towns to be disrespectful and irreverent. "The natives of Peru prefer to beg than to subject themselves to manual labor. Indians and black slaves furnish them with all the necessities of life, and this is what makes that rabble so insolent." In Bahia he noted that all the Portuguese had slaves in their households or to rent out. "Brazil is nothing but a den of thieves and murderers; there is no subservience, no obedience. The artisan with a dagger and a sword insults the respectable man, and treats him like an equal, because they are equal in the color of their faces." Finally, Le Gentil discussed explicitly what many travelers simply alluded to: Some women "make their houses into seraglios of female slaves. They ornament them with golden chains, bracelets, rings and rich laces. All these slaves have their lovers, and their mistresses divide with them the profits of their infamous trade." Le Gentil noted that the Portuguese born in Brazil seemed to prefer black or mulatto women to whites, which he explained by the fact that they were raised by slave nurses.

18. Nuno Marques Pereyra. *Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America*. Lisbon, 1731.

Pereyra denounced what he viewed as the many sins of Brazil in this moral tract. In addition to condemning the mistreatment of slaves and the unwillingness of the masters to promote the practice of Catholicism among the slaves, Pereyra also criticized the moral consequences of allowing slaves to live independently. "Many masters not only let



their slaves go wherever they like but let them live in liberty of conscience as long as they pay them a certain amount daily, weekly, or monthly. This happens principally in the towns and cities of Brazil. These slaves go and rent a house or shack, and offend God there, as everyone knows but their masters; because they do not look for them except to be paid, and do not concern themselves with knowing anything more. . . . And do you know what they use these houses for? For bawdyhouses to break the sixth commandment, for witchcraft, for dens of thieves, and finally, for the center of all evil."

19. Chevalier de Préfontaine. *Maison Rustique, à l'usage Des Habitans de la partie de la France équinoxiale, connue sous le nom de Cayenne*. Paris, 1763.

Préfontaine spent twenty years in Cayenne (French Guiana) and wrote this book as a manual on how to run a plantation there. In his chapter on slaves he advised planters and managers to be fair but firm and to make slavery supportable by providing decent housing, garden plots, poultry, and pigs. They should encourage marriages and avoid sexual liaisons with slave women, take care of slave children, and give the slaves Sundays off to hear mass and tend to their own affairs—by implication, these rules were not often observed. He emphasized the importance of having a good slave driver (also a slave), but, "no matter how good a slave driver is, one must always be on guard and not let him know how important he is; because he is still a black, although better than the others." Like many planters, Préfontaine had fixed ideas that certain African peoples showed specific characteristics: Congos were lazy, thieves, and liars, but they were talented traders; Carmentins intelligent, but rebellious, and so on.

20. Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa. *Relación Histórica del Viage a la América Meridional*. Madrid, 1748. Vol. II.

Juan and Ulloa were sent to America by the Spanish government in 1735 and reported on their findings publicly, in this book, and privately (and much more critically) in a secret report to the crown. This engraving portrays several human types in Peru as well as native animals such as the llama and vicuña. The Spanish Limeños (A and B) are



followed by a well-dressed and shod mulatto woman (D) and a black servant man (E) in livery. On the right a mulatto woman (F) is portrayed in riding dress. The two mulatto women appear to have the large thread-covered rolls of tobacco in their mouths which Lima women chewed to keep their teeth clean.

Although some slaves were fashionably dressed to reflect well on their masters, recalcitrant slaves were sent to work in bakeries. "It is the greatest punishment they can receive and no less rigorous than the worst of the galleys: working all day and part of the night, eating very little, sleeping little: so that after a few days the most arrogant and haughty slave loses all his bravado and weakens, and has no other recourse but to petition his master, nor is there a promise that he will not make to be taken out of there; the fear of which contains most of the large number of these persons inside and outside the capital."

21. Bryan Edwards. *The History, Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*. London, 1801. Vol. II.

Edwards, a Jamaican planter, described in detail the work regime of a Jamaican sugar plantation. Slave cottages were arranged in villages on the plantation, though elsewhere slaves were housed in barracks-like buildings. New slaves were put under the care of an older slave from the same African nation, forging a relationship like that between adoptive parents and children. The old slaves introduced the new ones to plantation work and helped them begin providing for their own subsistence. At the same time, the older slaves regained fresh contact with their past culture. During the time assigned for working on garden plots, the slaves also made mats, ropes, chairs, baskets, earthen jars, etc., and took some of their production to market on Sundays. They were allowed to keep the money they made in these markets.

22. [Journal of a slave overseer] [Jamaica: Somerset Vale] 13 October 1776–19 June 1778; 15 November 1778–10 August 1780.

This terse journal of work on a Jamaican plantation indicates the variety of tasks performed and the cycle of life and death. In the margins the overseer noted deaths and births on the plantation and on Sundays the slaves were given the day to work on their own provision



grounds. The work mentioned includes making bricks, building a road, fences, a mule pen, and logging as well as agricultural work such as weeding, planting, hoeing, picking coffee, and cutting cane.

23. [Charleston] *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser*. April 20–22, 1784.

South Carolina was the most slave-dependent state in the union. The advertisements in this newspaper are an indication of the importance of black labor in South Carolina. New slaves from Africa were offered with “every reasonable indulgence of credit,” skilled slave bricklayers and house servants were offered and sought, and the parishes announced assessment of taxes for poor relief based on slave ownership as well as ownership of land.

24. José Mariano da Conceição Velloso. *O Fazendeiro do Brazil*. Lisbon, 1798–1806. Vol. I.

Velloso wanted to encourage Brazilian plantation owners to diversify production and use more advanced agricultural methods by making available to them this collection of foreign and Portuguese essays on agriculture. In his introduction he particularly emphasized the deleterious environmental effects of using slave labor, especially deforestation. He wanted to restrict slave labor to mining and pointed out that if Brazilians would adopt the plow and other European agricultural methods, rather than the primitive and extensive form of agriculture they practiced using slave labor, among the benefits would be the saving of the expense required to purchase and sustain slaves.

25. William Tatham. *An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco*. London, 1806.

Tatham's treatise on tobacco production and trade contained information on the activities of slaves on tobacco plantations in the Chesapeake region. He himself had an ambivalent attitude towards slavery. “The propensity which the people of England seem to have, too generally, to impute the odium of a slave trade upon the inhabitants of a country on whom their own thirst after foreign lucre has bestowed the hated evil, induces me to notice *this worst condition of*



*its existence* in any part of the American continent which lies northward of the indigo culture [i.e., South Carolina]....Happily for myself, I neither am, nor ever shall be, a slave-holder."

26. John Mawe. *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, particularly the Gold and Diamond Districts of That Country*. London, 1812.

Gold was discovered in the interior of Brazil in 1695 and diamonds several decades later. The alluvial gold deposits were mined with gangs of slave laborers who stood in streams panning for gold. The province of Minas Gerais (General Mines) was the most prosperous in the Portuguese empire during the first half of the eighteenth century, thanks to gold, and the many slaves imported to work there left numerous black and mulatto descendants, both slave and free. The diamond mines were cordoned off in a special district monopolized by the Portuguese crown, which contracted out the mines and governed the Diamond District with the most draconian measures in order to discourage contraband. Slave gold miners were also especially important in Colombia.

27. João Rodrigues de Brito. *Cartas Econômico-Políticas sobre a Agricultura e Commercio da Bahia*. Lisbon, 1821.

In his critique of restraints on production and trade in Brazil, Brito, a member of the planter class, recognized that the slave system was the source of many of Brazil's economic problems. He denounced the ownership of unproductive slaves and the disdain for manual labor which resulted from the slave system. He believed that if slaves had a surer chance of gaining their freedom, they would be more productive, and as free men they would become industrious and law-abiding citizens. "Labor is only richly productive, where he who works, gathers the fruits."

28. John Luccock. *Notes on Rio de Janeiro and the Southern Parts of Brazil; Taken during a Residence of Ten Years in That Country, from 1808 to 1818*. London, 1820.

Luccock was an English merchant who lived and traveled in Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and southern Brazil. In the passage shown, he



describes slave porters and the way in which the carrying of anything, even a letter, had become identified as slave work.

29. Jean-Baptiste Debret. *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil*. Paris, 1834-1839. Vol. II.

Debret arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1816 as one of several French artists sent to establish an academy of arts and he stayed until 1831. His three-volume work is an exceptionally beautiful and careful visual record of life in early nineteenth century Brazil, especially Rio. He depicted the myriad activities of slaves and free blacks in the urban economy: domestic servants; barbers and surgeons; sawyers; porters; shoemakers and other artisans; and peddlers of an enormous variety of items—drinks and foodstuffs, baskets, poultry, corn, charcoal, forage, milk, vegetables, coffee, and so on. As shown here, many free black women worked as *quitandeiras*, sellers of fruits, vegetables and prepared food from established stalls in the squares of the city. Perambulating peddlers of snacks, sweets, and drinks were sometimes slaves belonging to *quitandeiras* or to other small property-owners who would send out the slaves with food every day and live from the proceeds of their sales.

30. Arsène Isabelle. *Voyage à Buenos-Ayres, et à Porto-Alegre... (de 1830 à 1834)*. Havre, 1835.

Isabelle was unfavorably impressed by the slave society of Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil in contrast to the free black communities of Argentina and Uruguay. The economy of Rio Grande was based primarily on ranching, and although some blacks were employed in raising livestock, in this province most of them were concentrated in the salt-beef industry which exported beef jerky (*charque*) to other parts of Brazil. Charque was one of the staples of the diet of slaves and the poor.

31. Alexander von Humboldt. *Essai Politique sur l'Ile de Cuba*. Paris, 1826. Vol. I.

Although blacks were first imported into Cuba in 1521, the island was not a major plantation society until the end of the eighteenth cen-



ture. In comparing the population statistics for the sugar or coffee plantation sector with the tobacco sector or the stock-raising sector of the economy in the early nineteenth century, Humboldt noted that the plantation sectors were 58–67 percent slave and 3–6 percent free colored, while in the other two sectors slaves made up only about 14 percent of the population and free colored another 20–24 percent. He remarked that these statistics demonstrated that “liberty diminishes in slave countries to the extent that cultivation and civilization increase.” Like other observers, he also noticed the comparatively advantageous position of the free colored in Cuban society and agreed that slaves were better off there than in, for example, Jamaica—“but what a sad spectacle when civilized and Christian peoples discuss which among them in three centuries has made fewer Africans perish in reducing them to slavery.”





Fig. 3  
A Government Employee in Brazil with his  
Family and Slaves.  
From Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Voyage Pittor-  
esque et Historique au Brésil* (Paris, 1834–  
1839), Vol. 2, Planche 5.



### III. Control

**I**N ALL SLAVE SOCIETIES there were both legal, codified systems of control and informal arrangements governed by custom. Slaves were a peculiar kind of property, and masters could not entirely ignore their humanity. Although the slave powers enacted laws designed to protect as well as control and regulate the slave population, all slave legislation was poorly enforced, and the true condition of slave life cannot be judged simply from legislation.

People of color who were not slaves were also subject to legal constraints and discrimination in New World societies. As their numbers grew, the very existence of free blacks challenged the racial dichotomy upon which New World slavery was based. In the French and British colonies, legal discrimination against them became more severe over time, while in Brazil and Spanish America the more rigidly hierarchical social structure tended to make their presence less threatening to white elites.

32. Eusebio Bentura Beleña. *Recopilación sumaria de todos los Autos Acordados de la Real Audiencia y Sala del Crimen de esta Nueva España*. Mexico City, 1787. Vol. I.

This collection of legal decisions from colonial Mexico includes several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century laws concerning the taxation of free blacks and mulattoes, prohibiting them from carrying swords or daggers, and forcing them to find employers or face public whipping. In the late eighteenth century, when black slaves were no longer as common in Mexico as formerly, the Mexican court recorded a royal order prohibiting the inhumane practice of branding new, legally imported slaves on the face or shoulder to distinguish them from those imported illegally.



33. *Le Code Noir, ou Edit du Roy, servant de reglement Pour le Gouvernement & l'Administration de Justice & la Police des Isles Françoises de l'Amerique, & pour la Discipline & le Commerce des Negres & Esclaves dans ledit Pays. Donné à Versailles au mois de Mars 1685.* Paris, 1735.

Issued by Louis XIV in 1685, the Code Noir was the foundation of slave legislation in the French colonies. Although the code instructed masters to baptize their slaves and encourage slave marriages, and not to obstruct their practice of Catholicism and celebration of feast days and holy days, the bulk of the code was concerned with close regulation of slave activities. As was the case with much slave legislation, masters tended to observe the protective provisions of the Code only when they found it convenient to do so.

34. Portugal. *Ley em que se accrescentão as penas impostas contra os mulatos, e pretos escravos do Brasil, que uzarem de armas prohibidas.* Lisbon, 1756.

All slave societies repeatedly prohibited slaves from carrying weapons but found it very difficult to enforce the prohibitions effectively. Slaves in many occupations needed tools which could sometimes be construed as arms. This Portuguese law refers to two previous laws in 1719 and 1749 which prescribed punishment of ten years in the galleys for slaves carrying knives and other prohibited weapons. The new law imposed a punishment of a hundred lashes at the public whipping post.

35. *Règlement de Police du 19 Juin de 1772.* Port-au-Prince, 1772.

These municipal police regulations for Port-au-Prince, the capital of Saint-Domingue, were also a repetition of old laws which "had been forgotten." The majority of the regulations relate to the activities of slaves and people of color and include the usual prohibitions on carrying weapons and the holding of assemblies, as well as provisions for the regulation of slave participation in markets, permits, curfews, and so on. In addition, free people of color were not allowed to have dances after 9:00 p.m., and the regulations stated how people claiming to be free who were arrested by the police could prove their freedom.



Finally, the police were allowed to enter the houses of free people of color at any time of day or night, "in case of suspicion, to visit in order to discover receivers of stolen goods."

36. *A Collection of all Such Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia*. . . . Richmond, 1792.

This page of the index shows a long list of legislative acts regarding slaves, including legislation on transfers of slave property as well as numerous laws to control and restrict slave activities. In contrast to Latin societies, the laws in Virginia did not permit slaves to hire themselves out and live a semi-independent life. Owners were to be punished if they allowed slaves "to go at large and trade as freemen," and "slaves suffered to go at large and hire themselves out, [were to] be apprehended and sold." The very enactment of these laws against slave hiring-out may indicate that the practice existed.

37. Hans Sloane. *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica*. London, 1707.

Sloane was physician to the governor of Jamaica in 1689 and recorded many observations about the material conditions of slave life, and their music and dance. On page lvii shown here, he describes at length the punishments inflicted on slaves.

38. William Smith. *A Natural History of Nevis, and the rest of the English Leeward Charibee Islands in America*. Cambridge, 1745.

Smith was rector of a parish in Nevis for five years, and his attitudes towards blacks were typical of the Anglican clergy. He declared that they had "no manner of Religious Worship as far as I could ever discover," yet he opposed baptism of slaves. "When a Slave is once Christened, he conceits that he ought to be upon a level with his Master, in all other respects." After describing various stringent punishments, Smith wrote, "You will say, that these Proceedings are very despotick: But if you consider, that we have near ten Blacks to one White Person, you must own them to be absolutely necessary." The complacent parson felt that social conventions were sufficient to keep most masters from mistreating their slaves. "I had a Parishioner, who in a barbarous

manner murdered one of his own Negroes; and though the Law would not hang him for it, yet he underwent a grievous Punishment; for (excepting his own Relations) not a single Gentleman would ever vouchsafe to converse with, or pay him a Visit, after he had committed the horrid Fact."



## IV. Resistance

**A**LMOST AS SOON as slaves arrived in the Americas they began to resist their servile status. A bloody slave uprising on Hispaniola in 1522 was followed by many others throughout the Americas until the abolition of the slave system. Runaway slaves who formed their own communities were called “maroons” from the Spanish *cimarrón*, meaning runaway livestock. Slaves also resisted in more individual and subtle ways, from sabotaging their work to suicide.

39. Sebastião da Rocha Pitta. *História da América Portuguesa*. Lisbon, 1730.

One of the most established runaway slave communities in the New World was the community of Palmares in the interior of northeastern Brazil. Unlike most *quilombos*, as the Brazilian maroon communities were called, it existed for nearly a century and withstood repeated attacks from both the Dutch and the Portuguese until final destruction in 1694, when the Portuguese sent 6000 men to besiege Palmares for 42 days. Rocha Pitta described the organization of the community, its contacts with colonial society, which included trade and raiding of plantations, and its mixture of Catholic and African religion. When the fall of Palmares became inevitable, the blacks’ leader, King Zombi, committed suicide, “and with that kind of death showed that he did not love life under slavery, and did not want to lose it under our blows.”

40. *Great Newes from the Barbadoes. OR, A True and Faithful Account of the Grand Conspiracy of the Negroes against the English*. London, 1676.

In 1675, slaves on Barbados planned an uprising to murder the whites and establish their own king but were given away by a slave

woman who overheard talk of the plot and informed her master. Thirty-five of the leaders were tried and executed by burning or beheading. Among the executed was Tony, who defied his interrogators with the words, "If you Roast me today, you cannot Roast me tomorrow."

41. Bryan Edwards. *The History, Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*. London, 1801. Vol. I.

In Jamaica, maroon communities were established during the English conquest of the island from the Spanish in 1655, and repeated slave revolts added to the rebel bands. The maroons were skilled guerrilla warriors and relied on plantation slaves for intelligence and ammunition. By the 1730s, Jamaican planters were fighting maroons and rebellious slaves all over the island and slaves were abandoning the plantations. In 1739, the Jamaican government and the maroons signed a peace treaty which recognized the liberty and autonomy of the maroons in return for which the maroons agreed to send new runaways back to their masters. Some slaves and rebels saw the treaty as a sell-out, but a planned slave revolt was crushed by the government.

42. John G. Stedman. *Narrative of a five years' expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America; from the year 1772, to 1777*. 2nd ed. London, 1806. Vol. II.

Numerous maroon communities flourished in the Guianas, but they were successful only in Suriname, where "Bush Negroes," as they continue to be known, remain as independent Afro-American cultures today. Several Bush Negro tribes signed peace treaties with colonial authorities in the 1760s, but a new phase of guerrilla war in the 1770s produced yet another group. John Stedman was a British soldier who fought the maroons in this period, and his experience gave him considerable sympathy and respect both for the slaves and the rebels. He catalogued their virtues, adding, "the negroes are likewise spirited and brave, patient in adversity, meeting death and torture with the most undaunted fortitude. Their conduct, in the most trying situations, approaching even to heroism; no negro sighs, groans, or complains, though expiring in the midst of surrounding flames."



43. [Daniel Horsmanden]. *A Journal of the Proceedings in The Detection of the Conspiracy Formed By Some White People, in Conjunction with Negro and other Slaves, For Burning the City of New York, in America, And Murdering the Inhabitants*. New York, 1744.

Circumstantial and contradictory evidence—a series of fires, testimony that blacks were seen nearby and had been heard talking about the fires, accusations elicited from people involved in other crimes—led New York authorities to believe that a few whites, including a Catholic priest, had encouraged slaves and free blacks in New York to plan the burning of the city and the murder of the whites in 1741. Horsmanden published the record of depositions and court proceedings with little commentary, and it is questionable whether the plot, which eventually implicated over two hundred people, ever existed. Nevertheless, severe sentences were meted out by the courts, including execution for the alleged ringleaders and sale or transportation out of the colony for others.

Echoing a sentiment repeated by the masters wherever slavery existed in the Americas, the prosecutor at the trial of the slaves Quack and Cuffee indignantly noted, “the monstrous Ingratitude of this black Tribe, is what exceedingly aggravates their Guilt. Their Slavery among us is generally softened with great Indulgence. They live without Care; and are commonly better fed and cloathed, and put to less Labour than the Poor of most Christian Countries.”

44. William Young. *An Account of the Black Charaibs in The Island of St. Vincent's*. London, 1795

According to Young, the Black Caribs in St. Vincent were descendants of slaves shipwrecked in 1675 and enslaved by the indigenous Caribs who found them. These blacks revolted against their Amerindian masters and made common cause with a group of maroons, calling themselves the Black Caribs. Through their contact with the Caribs, the blacks acquired Carib names and many Carib customs. Black Caribs, sometimes called Garifuna, also exist today in Belize, on the Caribbean coast of Central America.

45. Pierre Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture. *Proclamation. . . . A ses Concitoyens de la ville du Cap*. Cap François, 1797.

Only one slave rebellion was completely successful—the Haitian Revolution. In the cauldron of the French Revolution, with the free property-owning class divided between whites and people of color, slaves launched an uprising in 1791. After thirteen years of fighting, Haiti became the world's first black republic in 1804. Toussaint L'Ouverture, an ex-slave, was the supreme commander of the French Republic's army combining blacks and French revolutionary soldiers at the time of this proclamation, and he led them to victory over an English army of invasion.

46. *A Particular Account of the Commencement and Progress of the Insurrection of the Negroes in St. Domingo*. London, 1791.

This translation of a speech, made on behalf of white planter deputies to the French National Assembly three months after the beginning of the slave rebellion, is one of the John Carter Brown Library's very large number of items on the Haitian Revolution. After a vivid description of the effects of the rebellion, already involving 100,000 slaves, the deputies lamented the "ingratitude" of the slaves and made an apologia for the slave system.

47. Juan López Cancelada. *Código Formado Por Los Negros de la Isla de Santo Domingo de la Parte Francesa Hoi Estado de Hayti*. Cádiz, 1810.

The Haitian Revolution created both fear and admiration in the Americas, though usually not in the same people. Cancelada was a Mexican journalist who made this translation of the Haitian Constitution and legal codes, prefacing it with a short narrative of the events of the Haitian Revolution. The book includes engravings of all the major Haitian leaders. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, one of Toussaint's generals and the first ruler of independent Haiti, is shown here.



## V. Africans and Their Descendants in Multiracial Societies

**A**FRICANS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS in the Americas had to find their way in societies with complex patterns of racial, ethnic, and class differentiation: whites, blacks, Indians, mulattoes, *mestizos* (white-Indian mixture), *zambos* (black-Indian mixture), free and slave, African-born (*bozal*) and American-born (*creole*), not to speak of the variety of indigenous African cultures represented in the slave population. Especially in Latin America, the number of free people of color grew quickly, through manumission (the freeing of individual slaves) and self-purchase. Masters often freed favored slaves in their wills because of loyal service or because they were the master's own illegitimate children. Slaves could buy their own freedom with the money they earned through marketing goods and services on their own time. In Spanish America, with the exception of Cuba, there were more free people of color than slaves by the end of the eighteenth century, and the same was true in Brazil by 1850.

Although free people of color in Latin America suffered considerable discrimination, their numbers and social position were much more restricted in the British colonies and even in the French colonies, despite the presence in French America of the only significant group of free black and mixed-race landowners. Manumission and self-purchase were increasingly restricted in the British colonies, and the number of freedmen was correspondingly small. In the less hierarchical societies of British America, free people of color were a threat not only to a slave system based on race differences, but to the status system in general.

48. Giovanni F. Gemelli Careri. *Giro del Mondo*. Venice, 1719. Vol. VI.

During his visit to New Spain (Mexico) in 1697, this Italian traveler noticed the large number of blacks and mulattoes, as well as mestizos and Indians, in Mexico City. Though not permitted to dress exactly like Spaniards, they disdained Indian dress and invented their own "extravagant" costume, thus distinguishing themselves from both groups.

49. Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala [Waman Puma]. *El Primer Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno*. Mexico City, 1980. Vol. II.

This is a modern scholarly edition of a book-length manuscript now in the Royal Library of Denmark that was written between 1612 and 1615/16. Guaman Poma was a pious, Hispanicized Peruvian Indian who wrote to the Spanish king to inform him of the abuses in colonial society. He was particularly worried about the decline in the Indian population and the loss of Indian social cohesion through race mixture. His ambivalent attitude towards blacks, particularly those born in the colonies, illustrates the complex nature of race and class relations in colonial Peru. He condemned sinful behavior by blacks, especially their mistreatment of Indians, but he laid the ultimate responsibility for their behavior on their masters, who did not give sufficient food, clothing, shelter, appropriate punishment, or opportunity for stable family life. The caption to the drawing shown here reads as follows: "NEGROES/HOW CREOLE Negroes steal silver from their masters to deceive their Indian whores, and creole negro women steal to serve their Spanish and negro gallants." The black in the picture is saying "Here is silver, Indian woman," and she replies "Sir, my lord."

50. Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa. *Relación Histórica del Viage a la América Meridional*. Madrid, 1748. Vol. I.

During their visit to Cartagena on the Caribbean coast of present Colombia, Juan and Ulloa were faced with the complex mixture of races that had resulted there from centuries as the most important slave entry port in Spanish South America. The passage shown here is



a famous description of the complicated and fanciful nomenclature that had evolved to account for differences in racial background, with the emphasis on the degree of white blood and the extent to which a family was "advancing" towards white status.

51. Antonio de Ulloa. *Noticias Americanas*. Madrid, 1772.

In spite of the mark of slavery and illegitimacy which followed blacks and their descendants, they were in some respects socially superior to the nominally free Indians in colonial Peru. Relatively few blacks lived in the highlands, but in coastal Peru, as Ulloa remarked in this book, there were many unions between black men and Indian women. Indian women could see in this an economic advantage to their posterity, because as the future generations became removed from their Indian background they were no longer subject to the tributes levied only on the Indian population.

52. *Manuscrit d'un Voyage de France à Saint-Domingue, à la Havanne et aux Unis Etats D'Amérique*. [1816]

This eyewitness account of life in Saint-Domingue from the late 1780s through the revolution, slave uprising, and final independence of Haiti is particularly illuminating on the position of the free people of color in the colony. Although the anti-revolutionary author appeared to have little sense of the injustice of slavery, he was extremely critical of white racial prejudice and the way it divided the property-owning classes in the face of the revolution and the slave rebellion. "The proof that [the free people of color] did not at all hate the whites was that those who were rich landowners were never happier than when they could marry their daughters to whites. . . . These unhappy people, who were so good before the revolution, wanted only . . . to be closer to the whites, and the latter insisted obstinately in pushing them away. . . . I knew many whites who owed considerable gratitude to rich men of color who had arranged slaves for them, without whom they could not have gathered their harvests; and who had even helped them from their own purses in cases of urgent need . . . ; they were offered blows in place of payment."

53. [Alonso Carrió de la Vandra] Don Calixto Bustamante Carlos Inca, alias Concolorcorvo. *El Lazarillo de Ciegos Caminantes desde Buenos-Ayres, hasta Lima*. Gijon [Lima], 1773.

The population table shown here indicates that in 1770 slaves made up nearly 19 percent of the population of the city of Buenos Aires (Argentina). The black and colored population was undoubtedly greater because there was, in addition, an undisclosed number of free blacks and mulattoes in the city. The interior city of Córdoba also included a large number of locally-born black slaves who were employed in a variety of urban occupations. According to this author, slave manumissions were very rare there, and slaves and free people of color were not permitted to wear anything but locally-made coarse textiles.

The local ladies enforced this custom, if necessary. At one time a very elegant free mulatto woman took up residence in the city, and the city mothers sent her a message to dress according to her station. She paid no attention. One of the ladies invited her into her home on another pretext, and the lady's servants "took off her clothes, whipped her, burnt her finery, and dressed her in clothing corresponding to her birth, and even though the mulatto woman did not lack for protectors, she disappeared."

54. Olaudah Equiano. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*. London, 1789. Vol. II.

Equiano was kidnapped and sold into slavery as a child in Africa and spent many years as a slave seaman in British America. He was permitted to do some trading on his own account and eventually saved up enough money to buy his own freedom. His manumission document is shown here.

55. Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry. *Description Topographique et Politique de la Partie Espagnole de l'Isle Saint-Domingue*. Philadelphia, 1796. Vol I.

Moreau de Saint-Méry, a French colonist in Saint-Domingue (Haiti) before the revolution, wrote a number of works on the French Carib-



bean. In this study written before the revolution, he contrasted the flourishing export economy of the French part of the island of Hispaniola with the marginal colonial economy of the Spanish part (the Dominican Republic today). Because the Spanish colony was poorer, there were fewer slaves, and they did not labor under the harsh discipline of large plantations. Manumissions in wills and the freeing of slave mistresses and children was common. Although whites still avoided marriage with free people of color, the civil status of all free people was effectively the same, and restrictive legislation on both free people of color and slaves was poorly enforced. Slaves from the French part of the island ran away to the Spanish part knowing that they could join maroon communities or otherwise live relatively undisturbed.

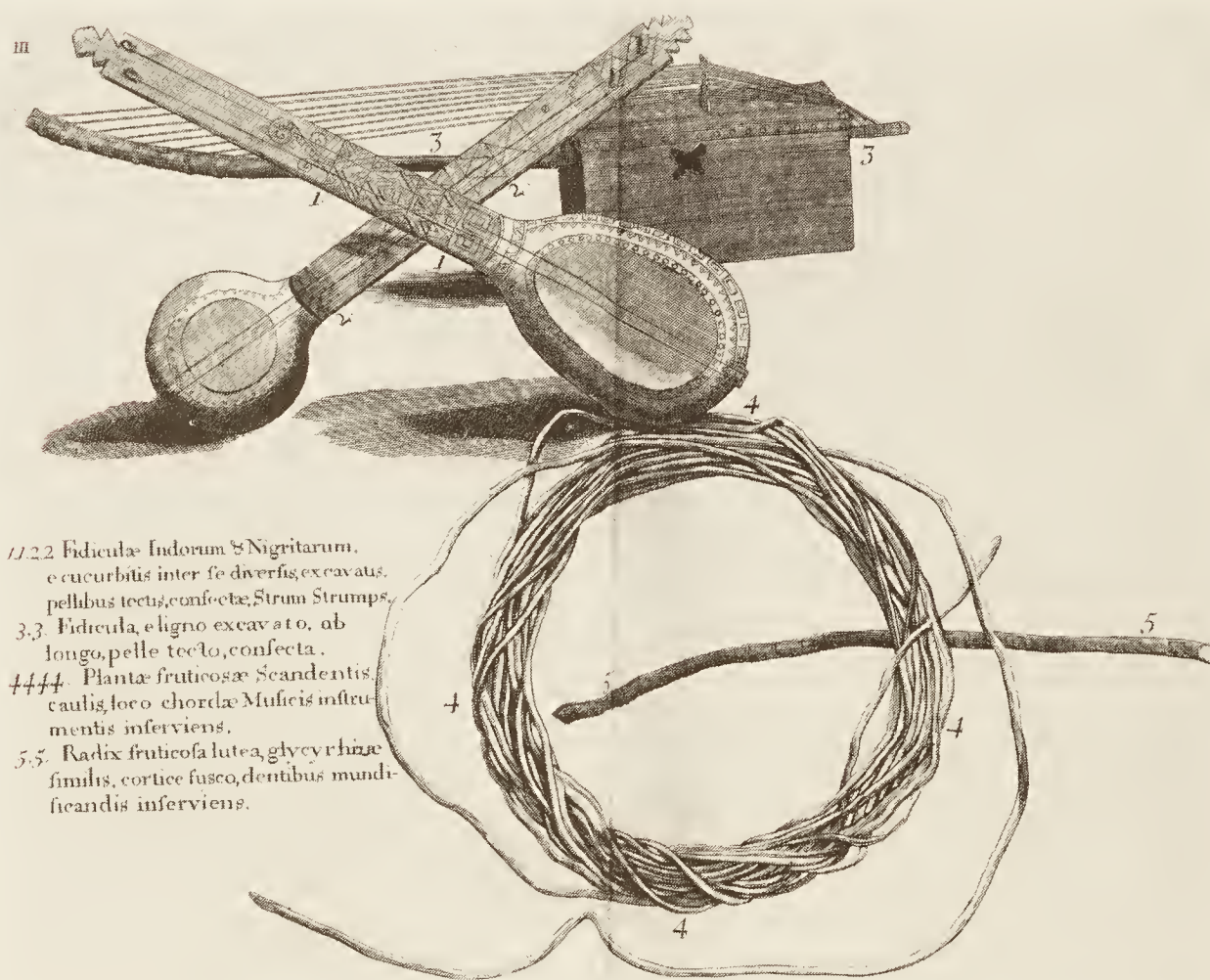


Fig. 4  
 African Musical Instruments in Jamaica.  
 From Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands  
 Madera, Barbados, Nieves, and Jamaica* (Lon-  
 don, 1707), Plate III following p. cliv.



## VI. Creation of an Afro-American Culture

**T**ORN FROM THE CLANS, families, and lineages which gave them identity in Africa and from a natural world infused with the presence of gods and spirits who could help or harm man, Africans arriving in the New World as the property of white men had to build a new culture from the fragments of African life they shared with other Africans. The contact slaves had with European colonial culture or Indian culture varied in degree, depending upon the colonial regime and the work situation of the slave, but elements of European and Indian culture were incorporated into an emerging Afro-American culture. Creole slaves and free people of color born in America were even more ambiguously situated in societies in which, although they had no personal memories of Africa, they were constantly reminded of their non-European origins.

56. José Fernández. *Apostólica y Penitente Vida de el V. P. Pedro Claver de la Compañía de Jesus*. Zaragoza, 1666.

Because the moral justification for the conquest of the Indies was the Christianization of the Indians, the Spanish at first paid little attention to the spiritual life of African slaves. This biography celebrates the life of San Pedro Claver, who dedicated his life to the baptism and care of African slaves in Cartagena. Although Claver intervened to protect slaves from harsh masters, promoted slave marriages, and comforted slaves in the slave markets and prisons, he also tried to enforce an austere Catholic morality among the slaves, making them give up their entertainments during Lent and attempting to keep blacks from celebrating African-style funeral rites.

57. Jamaica. *Acts of Assembly, passed in the Island of Jamaica, From the Year 1681 to the Year 1769 inclusive*. Kingston, Jamaica, 1787.

African religious practices were viewed (and feared) as witchcraft by Europeans throughout the New World. In fact, however, witchcraft could function as a method of resolving conflicts and imposing community sanctions in a society without other forms of governance. In Jamaica these practices were known as Obeah. Legislation in the early 1760s prescribed punishment by death or transportation for any practitioner of this "wicked Art of Negroes," who were "pretending to have Communication with the Devil."

58. Elie Monnereau. *Le Parfait Indigotier*. Amsterdam, 1765.

Monnereau's manual on how to run an indigo plantation in Saint-Domingue includes copious information on the character of slaves and how to manage them. He commented on the importance of funeral rites for the slaves and described the prayers, offerings, sacrifices, and singing and dancing which made up the funeral ceremonies. In addition, Monnereau admitted that blacks had useful medical knowledge, though, ever suspicious, he warned superstitious masters from being duped by their slaves. "I have seen such effects of [their knowledge] that I could not help but be convinced that they use their diabolical arts too well, extending to animals as well as their own comrades, whom they can put in such a pitiable state that it usually ends only with death."

59. "Idea de las Congregaciones Públicas de los Negros Bozales," *Mercurio Peruano*, Lima, 16 June 1791 and 19 June 1791.

In Spanish and Portuguese America, Catholic lay brotherhoods (*cofradías*, *hermandades*, or *irmandades*) provided an arena for slave and free blacks to create and govern their own communities. This article in an important, Enlightenment-influenced Peruvian periodical, described the organization and activities of African-born blacks (*bozales*) in the hermandad of Nuestra Señora del Rosario, a chapel founded and maintained by blacks. The brotherhoods, which were also widespread in urban Brazil, served as mutual-aid societies, especially to guarantee the members a decent funeral, and funded annual religious festivals. In Lima at the end of the eighteenth century, each of ten "nations," whose names reflected either African origins or slave



disembarkation points in America, elected leaders and held meetings where disputes were resolved and the disposition of the groups' funds decided upon. The meetings were generally followed by dances, the music provided by drums, flutes, and African-style percussion instruments including rattles, scrapers and the marimba, which, the author noted, "can sometimes produce sounds tolerable even for delicate ears." Black and mulatto carters, most of whom were creoles, had a separate hermandad.

60. Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry. *Danse*. Philadelphia, 1796.

In this essay on dancing composed in 1789, Moreau de Saint-Méry argued that people living in tropical countries are particularly given to the pleasures of dancing. After describing the social dances of whites and free people of color in the French Caribbean (and the racial divisions in social entertainments), he presented detailed descriptions of African dances such as the "kalendas," and "vaudoux" with their drums, maracas, string instruments, hand-clapping, call and response choral singing, and rigorous rhythms. He also mentioned the "Danse à Don Pedre," known in Saint-Domingue since 1768 and named after a black leader who was "denounced to justice as the head of alarming projects." As described, the dance appears to have much in common with the ecstatic religious states characteristic of Yoruba-based African religions found in the Caribbean and Brazil. "It was necessary to severely prohibit the Don Pedre, because it caused great disorders and it awakened ideas contrary to public peace."

61. Thomas Lindley. *Narrative of a Voyage to Brazil*. London, 1805.

Lindley was in Brazil in 1802 and 1803. Like many European visitors he commented on the musicality of all Brazilians and particularly on the prevalence of well-trained black and mulatto musicians. Blacks not only excelled at their own music but were educated in the European musical tradition. As he noted here, black barber-surgeons trained groups of black musicians who could be rented out for festivities.

62. Samuel Davies. *Letters from . . . Shewing the State of Religion in Virginia, particularly among the Negroes*. London, 1757.

In the English colonies, planters and the Anglican clergy generally took little interest in the religious conversion of slaves. It was dissenting ministers like Samuel Davies who devoted themselves to teaching slaves about Christianity and even to read. Davies also noted the central place of music in black religious expression, and he described hymn-singing sessions which lasted all night long.

63. Morgan Godwyn. *The Negro's & Indians Advocate, Suing for their Admission into the Church*. London, 1680.

As a Virginia-born Anglican minister who served in Barbados, Godwyn heard all the English planters' arguments against Christianizing their black slaves. "They object the Knowledge, wherewith their Slaves would be thereby furnished; which they are sure will make them less governable, and like . . . to mutiny and rebel, to free themselves from Tyranny and Oppression." Godwyn, however, argued that Christianity required slaves and servants to obey their masters, and that religion could be a strong acculturating force. A common religion was a bond "making Men . . . forget their own People, and their Fathers House, and joyning them in affection to the most distant Strangers."

64. Abraham Brunias. *This Plate (representing a Cudgelling Match between English and French Negroes in the Island of Dominica)*. London, 1779.

Slave owners encouraged divisions within the black population. Slaves from different African peoples, the African-born and the creole or American-born, blacks and mulattoes, and in this case blacks identified with English or French masters, were encouraged to compete with one another in festivities and sports matches, and these divisions often became a part of their own culture. In this engraving, the ragged and barefoot slaves contrast with the lighter-skinned man wearing breeches, stockings, and shoes standing at the door of a hut, which might be a tavern or store. This sport was also found in some African societies.



65. Jean-Baptiste Debret. *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil*. Paris, 1834–1839. Vol. III.

Funeral rites were an especially significant part of African religious practice, easing the deceased's transition from the world of the living to the world of the ancestors. This plate shows two black funerals—the burial of a black woman in a church and the funeral procession of the son of a black king. The woman's body in a covered hammock is accompanied by woman bearers as others stand nearby clapping hands. The African-style funeral procession was preceded by a standard-bearer, a man setting off fireworks, acrobats, and drummers, and was accompanied by an honor guard. Outside the church where the funeral was held there were more firecrackers and African music.



Fig. 5  
Symbol of the Anti-Slavery Society.  
From John Marjoribanks, *Slavery: An Essay  
in Verse* (Edinburgh, 1792), p. 1. (Much en-  
larged).



## VII. Slavery Attacked and Defended: Towards Emancipation

THE FIRST TARGET of the opponents of slavery was the slave trade, and the political campaign for abolition of the trade began with English Quakers in the early eighteenth century. Denmark prohibited its small slave trade by 1802, and the British Parliament passed a bill abolishing the English slave trade in 1807. In succeeding years other major slave powers followed suit: the United States in 1808, Holland in 1814, France in 1818, Spain in 1820, Brazil in 1831, Portugal in 1836. However, the United States, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil did not enforce these bans for many years; the British Navy attempted to enforce them by treating captured slavers as pirates. The last known transatlantic slave shipment arrived in Cuba in 1864. The end of the slave trade did not cause the slave system to collapse immediately, as many abolitionists had hoped.

66. [Thomas Tryon]. *Friendly Advice to the Gentlemen-Planters of the East & West Indies*. London, 1684.

Tryon's work is an early example of anti-slavery literature. It included most of the arguments against the institution which during the eighteenth century would be repeated with increasing frequency. Tryon gave voice to slave complaints of maltreatment and unchristian behavior by the masters. "As for the blackness of our Skins, we find no reason to be ashamed of it. . . . In a word, if our *Hue* be the only difference, since *White* is as contrary to *Black*, as *Black* is to *White*, there is as much reason that *you* should be our *Slaves*, as we yours."

67. *A Letter from a Merchant at Jamaica to a Member of Parliament in London, Touching the African Trade, To which is added, A Speech made by a Black of Gardaloupe, at the Funeral of a Fellow-Negro.* London, 1709.

The merchant's letter introducing the slave's speech gives several examples of separate sales of slave husbands and wives and the gruesome punishments of slaves. The speech, which explains the iniquity of the slave trade, was supposedly made at the funeral of a slave killed by his master for taking a loaf of bread. "Would not any one think himself greatly injur'd, if another should make him his perpetual Slave, only because he gave £20 for him, to one who had him in his power?"

68. Samuel Hopkins. *Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans.* Norwich, 1776.

The Rhode Island preacher Samuel Hopkins refuted all the common arguments in favor of slavery in this pamphlet promoting the abolition of slavery in all the American states.

69. John Barrow. *A Voyage to Cochinchina in the years 1792 and 1793.* London, 1806.

During his short visit to Brazil, Barrow made many sharp observations on the slave system. He saw that some slaves were better off than others and believed that Brazilian slaves in general were not as harshly treated as those in the West Indies. However, Barrow rejected the widespread argument of apologists for slavery that slaves were better off than the rural worker in Europe. He understood clearly that the central moral issue posed by slavery was personal freedom and autonomy. For the slave, "every action and every moment of his life put him in mind of his unfortunate condition; he must work move, speak, eat, sleep, and exert, in short, every action and energy, both of body and soul, to the will and caprice of his owner. . . . Even admitting that [the Africans'] situation was improved by a passage across the Atlantic, by what rule of right do we assume to ourselves the power of compelling people to be happy contrary to their wishes?"



70. Ezra Stiles and Samuel Hopkins. "To the Public..." Newport, 1773.

The president of Yale and the abolitionist Rhode Islander joined to encourage the public to support a plan to send two blacks to school and then to Africa to preach the gospel. One of the men they had in mind for this mission was the son of an African chieftain who had been sent overseas for an education and unjustly sold into slavery. The second report on this project, dated April 10, 1776, asked for more contributions and detailed further information on contact with the family of the black man who had been unjustly enslaved. Stiles and Hopkins appealed to the revolutionary fervor of their countrymen: "For while we are struggling for our civil and religious liberties, it will be peculiarly becoming and laudable to exert ourselves to procure the same blessings for others, so far as it is in our power."

71. *Account of the Number of Inhabitants in the Colony, of Rhode-Island.* 1774.

Newport had been one of the centers of the slave trade in the first half of the eighteenth century, but from 1774, the time of this census, all new slaves entering Rhode Island immediately became free, though the status of existing slaves was not affected. Rhode Island had a proportionately larger black population than any other New England colony, though the blacks were concentrated in South Kingstown, Newport, and Providence.

72. Isidoro de Antillón. *Disertación sobre el origen de la Esclavitud de los Negros, Motivos que la han perpetuado, ventajas que se le atribuyen y medios que podrian adoptarse para hacer prosperar nuestras colonias sin la esclavitud de los Negros.* Mallorca, 1811.

This address was delivered to the Madrid Academy of Spanish and Public Law in 1802 but it was not published until after the liberal Spanish parliament that was combatting the Napoleonic occupation of Spain passed a law permitting freedom of the press. Antillón based his anti-slavery views on Enlightenment principles of individual liberty which he believed provided the basis for all other natural rights. He rejected arguments that blacks were needed in Spanish America because the Indian population was weak and less productive. Aboli-

tion of the slave trade and slavery would also make Spain less dependent on other European countries and colonial staples would be produced more cheaply because "the Indian lives on very little, and it would not be necessary to burden the product with the interest or the capital of his price." As a class, slaves inevitably hated their masters and would eventually wreak vengeance, the Haitian Revolution being a case in point. For this reason, Antillón proposed a gradual transition to freedom involving the establishment of schools, and service to masters until age 25, when freedom would be given.

73. José Joaquim da Cunha de Azeredo Coutinho. *Analyse Sobre a Justiça do Commercio de Resgate dos Escravos da Costa da Africa*. Lisbon, 1808; and *Concordância das Leis de Portugal e das Bullas Pontifícias, das quaes humas Permittem a Escravidão dos Pretos d'Africa, e outras Prohibem a Escravidão dos Indios do Brazil*. Lisbon, 1808.

A Brazilian intellectual, bishop, and member of a rich, sugar producing family, Azeredo Coutinho saw attacks on the legality of the slave trade as part of a general assault on all law, authority, and civilization by proponents of natural law and Enlightenment principles. In his analysis of the justice of the slave trade, however, he attempted a defense of slavery and the slave trade on scientific, historical, and economic as well as religious grounds. Arguing that human justice cannot be absolute but that laws must be just in relation to circumstances, he followed the traditional view that enslavement by Christians was a lesser evil for "Barbarous Nations," and that the apostles never called slavery unjust—but merely instructed the master to treat his slave with humanity. All hard outdoor labor was always done under some kind of coercion and the free poor man was simply a "slave of hunger," in many respects worse off than a slave who was fed and taken care of in sickness by his master. "Among Nations where there are many empty lands and relatively few inhabitants and where each person can be a landowner, slavery is justly established: such are the nations of Africa, Asia and America: and among the nations with few or no empty lands without private owners, freedom is established as in most of the nations of Europe; but this so-called freedom is not due to enlighten-



ment, or a greater degree of civilization in those nations, but is due to the greater or lesser number of inhabitants relative to the land which a nation occupies."

In addition to the usual arguments against slave trade opponents (the prior existence of slavery in Africa, benefits of Christianity, etc.), Azeredo Coutinho also replied to the 250-year old arguments of Mercado [number 1] in practical terms. He maintained that in all trade, people and nations buy and sell without examining if property originated in just title or absolute justice and the same principle should obtain in the slave trade. Once enslaved, the slave was likely to be treated well by the master, if not from charity, then from economic interest.

74. Francisco Soares Franco. *Ensaio sobre os Melhoramentos de Portugal, e do Brazil*. Lisbon, 1820.

In this essay published two years before the independence of Brazil, the Portuguese essayist devoted considerable attention to the bad effects of slavery on the colony. Calling the slave trade contrary to both religion and good policy, he favored an end to the slave trade (with the exception of legal importation of slaves for work in the mines), a slow transition to freedom through traditional means for existing slaves, and freedom for all people born in Brazil. Franco saw slavery as a political and an economic threat to Brazil. Masters and slaves would always fear and hate one another because their relationship of necessity was based on violence or the threat of violence. Slaves did all the work in Brazil: "Little by little the population of slaves increases, and that of masters decreases; labor and activity is the sphere of the former; pride and indolence of the latter. . . . The most rustic men are always intelligent enough to understand the advantages of liberty. There is even a great belief among [the blacks], which is that God first gave this land to copper-colored men, and then to the whites, and that it will pass to the blacks."

Franco was an early proponent of the "whitening" policy based on greater European immigration which late nineteenth-century Brazilians hoped would solve the "problem" of the country's predominantly non-white population. He advocated a continuation of the restrictions

on bestowing honors and official positions on free blacks and first generation mulattoes, but if a person could prove that neither of his parents was African, "then it seems that he should already be considered as perfectly equal to a white."

75. João Severiano Maciel da Costa [Marquez de Queluz]. *Memória sobre a Necessidade de Abolir a Introdução dos Escravos Africanos no Brasil*. Coimbra, 1821.

The Brazilian-born Marquez de Queluz condemned slavery in Brazil as part of a wide-ranging argument on the economic future of the country. Although he agreed that slavery was inhumane on philosophical grounds, he was most concerned with its political and economic effects. Lacking social links to the rest of society, slaves were inherently dangerous to security; slave labor was inherently less productive than free labor, and where all work was done by slaves, free workers detested it by association. "Infinite numbers of white and colored families vegetate inside their houses in idleness, poverty and even debauchery; and nowhere do they subject themselves to the service, even domestic, of rich and honorable families, as in Europe. Their supreme good is to possess a slave for work outside the house, and a female slave for domestic work; . . . in one word, idleness is nobility in Brazil, and laziness has here established its throne." The continuation of slave-based production of colonial crops meant stunted internal markets, dependence on foreign markets, and possible overproduction and low prices which would result in economic and social problems at home. Queluz proposed a planned end to the slave trade and a slow transition to free labor.

76. *Tratado Da abolição do Tráfico de Escravos em todos os lugares da Costa de Africa ao Norte do Equador, entre os muitos altos, e muito poderosos senhores O Príncipe Regente de Portugal, e El-Rei do Reino-Unido da Grande Bretanha e Irlanda: Feito em Vienna pelos Plenipotenciários de huma e outra Corte em 22 de Janeiro de 1815, e ratificado por Ambas.* 1815.

Once the British abolished their own slave trade, they began pressuring other slaving countries to make the trade illegal. Because of



British assistance to the Portuguese during the Napoleonic Wars, Portugal was subject to considerable influence from that quarter. With this treaty Portugal agreed to prohibit Portuguese subjects from buying slaves or carrying on the slave trade on any part of the African coast north of the equator. Portugal also committed itself to a future treaty that would end the slave trade throughout the Portuguese empire.

77. *The Slave Colonies of Great Britain; or A Picture of Negro Slavery drawn By the Colonists themselves. Being An Abstract of the Various Papers Recently Laid Before Parliament on that Subject.* London, 1825.

The anti-slavery forces in England discovered that the abolition of the slave trade did not inevitably result in the collapse of slavery itself, so they began a new campaign for the gradual abolition of slavery. In 1823 the British government agreed to press the colonial assemblies to pass laws ameliorating the conditions of slave life and promised in the future to put full emancipation before Parliament. This collection of parliamentary papers reports on the execution of the amelioration acts in the British colonies. Most West Indian planters resisted the amelioration proposals, and the assemblies only grudgingly passed a few of the acts. The New Consolidated and Ameliorated Slave Act of Barbados in this collection, for example, shows the continuation of the extremely restrictive legal condition of slaves. With the example of the Haitian Revolution before them, British West Indian planters from the 1790s on attempted to gain the support of free people of color with limited improvements in their status. In many cases, the free colored found that the white ruling class was not willing to give them full equality, and they then realized that an improvement in their situation could only come with the elimination of slavery.

78. William Knibb. *Facts and Documents Connected with the Late Insurrection in Jamaica, and the Violations of Civil and Religious Liberty Arising Out of It.* London, 1832.

Slaves in the British colonies were aware of the debates over emancipation and the efforts of the Anti-Slavery Society, and a series of revolts broke out based on rumors of colonial refusal to grant freedom

in Barbados in 1816, in Demerara [Guyana] in 1823, and in Jamaica in 1831. The Jamaican revolt began as a peaceful general strike led by a slave Baptist deacon who hoped to force the colonial assembly to accede to abolitionist demands. But soon the slaves set fire to sugar cane fields, sugar works, and estate houses, and by the time the revolt was put down, over 400 slaves had been killed and some 100 executed. The revolt was blamed on Baptist missionaries like William Knibb, who were tried and acquitted of having instigated it. In this pamphlet Knibb published the confessions he heard from leaders of the revolt (in which rumors of freedom figured prominently) and protested the destruction of Baptist chapels and other property by militia and a white vigilante group called the Colonial Church Union.

79. *An Act for the Abolition of Slavery in this Island, and for the Establishment of a System of Apprenticeship for a Limited Time, in Lieu Thereof.* Saint Christopher, 1834.

With the passage of the Reform Act of 1832, the West Indian planter lobby lost seats in the British Parliament. The next year, Parliament passed the Emancipation Act, which declared that slavery was to end on August 1, 1834. However, in order to avoid disruption of the plantation system, the colonies were permitted to institute an apprenticeship system as a transitional stage to free labor. Field workers were to serve six years apprenticeship and other former slaves were to serve four years. They were to work forty and one-half hours a week gratis for their former masters and were to be paid for any further work. Special magistrates were appointed to settle disputes and to help set prices for the purchase of total freedom by an apprentice. The ex-slaves, of course, objected to the apprenticeship system and rioted in several places. The masters, as this legislation from Saint Kitts shows, passed numerous laws to retain control over the apprentices. Many of these laws differed little from traditional slave control legislation. The apprenticeship system proved unworkable and ended early in 1838.

80. Ladies Society for Promoting Early Education of Negro Children. London, 1833?

The Society produced this series of six colored engravings of work on a sugar plantation accompanied by large-print explanations



directed to children. The moralistic tone of these didactic pieces was clearly intended to encourage the continuation of a docile plantation work force: "Though Cadjoe is no longer a slave, he does not forget that he is a servant." There was also an implied threat if the ex-slaves did not fulfill their role in the imperial economy: "The English people are almost as fond of Sugar as the Negroes and they send them many good things in return. . . . And the more Sugar the Negroes make for their Massas, the more of these good things will they have in return. But if they are idle, and choose to do their own work during crop season, instead of getting a holiday when they can more easily be spared, they will be the worse off for it in the end. In England there are no slaves but every one must work, or he and his wife and children must starve, and go in rags."

81. Z. Macaulay, comp. and trans. *Haïti, ou Renseignements authentiques sur L'Abolition de L'Esclavage et ses Résultats à Saint-Dominique et à la Guadeloupe, avec des détails sur l'état actuel d'Haïti et des Noirs émancipés qui forment sa population*. Paris, 1835.

Slavery had been abolished by the French revolutionary assembly in 1793, but Napoleon reimposed slavery in the remaining French colonies in 1802. Slaves resisted the return to slavery in bitter uprisings in the 1820s and 1830s, and the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean helped stimulate the formation of a Society for the Abolition of Slavery in Paris in 1834. The combination of the society's efforts and slave resistance resulted in final emancipation during the revolution of 1848. This collection of documents was dedicated to the president of the Society and includes a long section describing independent Haiti. While the successful slave revolt haunted slave holders throughout the Americas, favorable views of independent Haiti served to promote emancipation. Included here are letters from Haiti by Richard Hill, a well-educated Jamaican of mixed birth who had been appointed a magistrate to oversee the execution of the emancipation act in one Jamaican parish. Hill referred repeatedly to "the happy influence . . . of liberty" on the Haitians: "Their upright posture, their athletic forms, and the physiognomy which the habitual feeling of liberty gives, recalls the Maroon Negro of Jamaica: it is the same expression, the same bearing, and the same air of independence."



NÈGRES CANGUERDS



DIFFÉRENTES NATIONS NÈGRES.

Fig. 6  
 Cask Carriers and Black Men of Different  
 Nations.  
 From Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil* (Paris, 1834–1839), Vol. 2, Planche 36.



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In preparing this exhibition, I am indebted to the many scholars who have labored to unveil the once-hidden world of Africans and Afro-Americans in this hemisphere. Herbert S. Klein's *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), which clearly sums up the results of decades of research, was particularly useful, as were several regional studies: Frederick P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974); Colin A. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, (New York: Norton, 1972); and Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Orlando Patterson's magisterial study of slavery throughout history, *Slavery and Social Death*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) stimulated my thinking on the nature of slavery and its particular manifestations in the historical and regional context of New World colonization.

There is a voluminous and growing literature on Africans and their descendants in slavery and freedom. One of the most comprehensive bibliographical sources on slavery is Joseph C. Miller, *Slavery: A Worldwide Bibliography, 1900-1982*, (White Plains: Kraus International, 1985). Miller periodically updates the bibli-

ography in the journal *Slavery and Abolition*. In addition to the books listed above, the following studies, some new and some now classic, provide an introduction to the wealth of past and ongoing scholarship on the African experience in the Americas.

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